

Message to the Congress Transmitting Documentation on Most-Favored-Nation Trade Status for Certain Former Eastern Bloc States

June 3, 1997

To the Congress of the United States:

I hereby transmit the document referred to in subsection 402(d)(1) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (the "Act"), with respect to a further 12-month extension of authority to waive subsections (a) and (b) of section 402 of the Act. This document constitutes my recommendation to continue in effect this waiver authority for a further 12-month period, and includes my reasons for determining that continuation of the waiver authority and waivers currently in effect for Albania, Belarus,

Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan will substantially promote the objectives of section 402 of the Act. I have submitted a separate report with respect to the People's Republic of China.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
June 3, 1997.

NOTE: The related determination of June 3 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks on Signing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997

June 4, 1997

Thank you very much. He did a great job, didn't he? Thank you, Josh, for your story. Thank you, Judy, for your work and the power of your example. And thanks to your mom. [Laughter]

I thank Secretary Riley. I thank all the children who are here with me on the platform who have come to symbolize what this legislation is all about and all the children who are out there in the crowds. I thank those of you who have helped me over the years to know and understand what is at stake in this issue more clearly. I thank especially the people who deserve the credit for what we're doing today, the Members of Congress, the committee chairs: Senator Jeffords and Congressman Goodling and Senator Kennedy and Senator Harkin, Congressmen Clay and Martinez and Riggs. I'd like to say a special word of thanks to all the staff people who worked on this but especially to David Hoppe, Senator Lott's chief of staff, who did such a fine job here. Thank you, David.

I would like to ask—they're all going to come up here later when we sign the bill, but there must be 30 Members of Congress here. And this bill, as you know, received virtual unanimity of support across party lines and regional lines. And in addition to the Members whose names

I mentioned, I'd like to ask all the Members of Congress to stand here and be recognized for what they did. Thank you all.

I thank all the advocates who are here. I dare not start to identify you all, but I will say I am glad to see Eunice Shriver here, and thank you for what you have done to help me understand this issue better.

For 22 years now, the IDEA has been the driving force behind the simple idea we have heard restated and symbolized here today, that every American citizen is a person of dignity and worth, having a spirit and a soul, and having the right to develop his or her full capacities. Because of IDEA, disabled children all over America have a better chance to reach that capacity. And through IDEA, we recognize our common obligation to help them make the most of their God-given potential.

We are here today to reaffirm and to advance that goal. Education clearly will become even more important to our people in the days ahead; that is why I have made it my number one priority as President. That is why last month, when we announced the bipartisan agreement to balance the budget, I was most proud that we could do that and include an historic investment in education, the most significant increase

in funding for education at the national level in 30 years.

America Reads, a massive volunteer effort to help make sure all of our children can read independently by the time they're 8 years old; millions of families getting a tax cut to help them pay for a college education; hundreds of thousands more deserving students getting Pell grants; tens of thousands of schools across America now will be wired to the Internet; support for raising academic standards—we know that this is the right thing to do for every American. But just as we heard from Judy, for far too long children with disabilities were closed out of those kinds of opportunities, trapped in a system without guideposts, influenced by stereotypes, dominated by assumptions that people like Josh couldn't take the courses that he just enumerated.

In 1975, Congress began to change that when the IDEA was enacted. It has meant the right to receive an education that all children deserve. It has given children who would never have had it the right to sit in the same classrooms, to learn the same skills, to dream the same dreams as their fellow Americans. And for students who sat next to them in those classrooms, it has also given them the chance to learn a little something, to get rid of the baggage of ignorance and damaging stereotypes, and to begin to understand that what we have in common is far more important than what divides us.

Since the passage of the IDEA, 90 percent fewer developmentally disabled children are living in institutions; hundreds of thousands of children with disabilities attend public schools and regular classrooms; 3 times as many disabled young people are enrolled in colleges and universities; twice as many young Americans with disabilities in their twenties are in the American workplace. We have to continue to push these trends, to do everything we can to encourage our children with disabilities not only to dream of doing great things but to live out their dreams.

Our job is not yet done. All of you know that despite this progress, young people with disabilities still drop out of high school at twice the rate their peers drop out of high school and into less certain futures. For those who stay in school, lower expectations and exclusion still are far too common. Too many parents still find themselves fighting for educational re-

sources and services that are their children's right and their hope for a brighter future.

Today we are taking the next steps to do better. The expanded IDEA reaffirms and strengthens our national commitment to provide a world-class education for all our children. It ensures that our Nation's schools are safe and conducive to learning for children, while scrupulously protecting the rights of our disabled students.

First, this bill makes it clear once and for all that the children with disabilities have a right to be in the classroom and to be included in school activities like work experience, science clubs, and field outings. It requires States and school districts to help to get disabled children ready to come to school and to accommodate them once they are there with services ranging from preschool therapy to sign language interpreters, from mobility instructors to an extended school year.

Second, this legislation mandates that with appropriate accommodations, children with disabilities learn the same things with the same curricula and the same assessments as all other children. We know from every teacher and every principal, from every parent and every coach, that children rise to expectations when they are set high. And children with disabilities are no exception.

I have asked America to embrace high national academic standards for all our children. So far, education leaders from California to Carolina, from Michigan to Maryland have endorsed this effort. I believe very strongly that all children can make progress. Today I call upon those States to give every child the chance and the expectation of meeting those standards.

Third, we know our children's success depends upon the quality of their teachers and the involvement of their parents. This legislation will help more regular classroom teachers get the full range of teaching skills they need to teach children with disabilities. And it will require regular education teachers to be involved in the development of individual education plans to help disabled children succeed.

This legislation also gives parents a greater voice in their children's education. At long last, it will give them something other than what parents have expected from their schools for decades. It will give them what we know all parents should be entitled to: simply, regular report cards on their children's progress.

High school is a make-or-break time for all young people, but teenagers with disabilities often need more help to succeed as they make the transition from school to work. This legislation will require schools to give students that help by developing individual plans that may include independent living skills, job training, and preparation for higher education. And because acquiring these skills may take extra time, these plans must begin by the time the students with disabilities reach the age of 14.

Now, that is what the expansion of the legislation these Members of Congress have passed will achieve. In a few moments I will sign it into law. As I do, I want you to think about what it really accomplishes.

To the 5.8 million children whose futures are in the balance, we are saying: We believe in you. We believe in your potential, and we are going to do everything we can to help you develop it.

To the millions of families who are depending upon us to help them prepare their children to take their place in the world, we are saying: We are proud of you for your devotion to your children, for your belief in them, for your love for them, and we are going to do everything we can to help you succeed in preparing them.

To the teachers and the administrators who make all the difference, we are saying: We are depending upon you, and we are going to do what we can to support you.

To the American people, we are saying that we do not intend to rest until we have conquered the ignorance and prejudice against disabilities that disables us all.

And to the world, we are sending a message, the same message that the FDR Memorial I was honored to dedicate last month will send: In America, you are measured by what you are and what you can achieve. In America, the American dream is alive for all our people. In America, we recognize that what really counts is the spirit and the soul and the heart, and we honor it with this legislation.

Now I would like to ask the children and the people here with me on the platform to join me as I sign the legislation. And I would like to ask the Members of Congress who are here, every one of them, to come up, along with Tom Hehir, the Director of the Office of Special Education, as we sign into law the Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 1997.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:12 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to student Joshua Bailey, who introduced the President; Assistant Secretary of Education Judith E. Heumann; and Eunice Shriver, founder, Special Olympics International. H.R. 5, approved June 4, was assigned Public Law No. 105-17.

Statement on Signing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997

June 4, 1997

It is with great pleasure that I have today signed into law H.R. 5, the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997." This Act reaffirms and strengthens our national commitment to the education of children with disabilities and their families.

Since the enactment of Public Law 94-142 over 20 years ago, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has made it possible for millions of children with disabilities to receive an education, helping them become productive adults. The bill before me today builds on that success story by:

- putting an even sharper focus on improving educational results for these children through greater access to the general curriculum and inclusion in State and district-wide assessments;
- giving parents more information, including regular reports on their children's progress, and a greater role in decisions affecting their children's education;
- reducing paperwork and increasing administrative flexibility;
- asking children with disabilities, along with schools, teachers, and parents to assume